

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A de-centralized, or distributed, monitoring system provides for data collection across a broad range of remote sources, collecting explicit data (which may be input directly by a user in the form of recommendation, comment, or vote) and/or implicit data (which may be collected by the system according to the user's browsing activity). Data may be monitored locally at the client side, and subsequently transmitted to a central database. Data may be aggregated at the server, having been collected on the client side from multiple remote sources. During the aggregation process, data collected by the distributed monitoring system are categorized and organized in a central database for convenient retrieval. Implementation of the collected data includes both transmitting explicit data on demand as well as utilizing explicit data, implicit data, or a combination of both explicit and implicit data, in an open recommendation system which facilitates customization and personalization of the information retrieval process. A user may be provided with the option of turning off, or "deselecting," the implicit data collection functionality of the system.